

**SPEECH BY THE HONORABLE DEPUTY MINISTER FOR  
FOOD AND AGRICULTURE, DR AHMED YAKUBU ALHASSAN  
DELIVERED AT THE SEMINAR FOR POLITICIANS AND HIGH  
LEVEL POLICY MAKERS ON CLIMATE CHANGE EFFECTS  
ON 29<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2014, COCONUT GROOVE HOTEL, ACCRA**

**M**r. Chairman, Honorable Members of Parliament, Honorable Colleague Ministers, Director General of the CSIR, Chief Directors, Research Scientists, National Directors of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Media Partners, Invited Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my singular honor to give the keynote address for this very important meeting, which is aimed at discussing the developmental issue of climate change particularly as it relates to Agriculture.

Mr. Chairman, Ghana is known to be among the most vulnerable countries in Africa to the impacts of climate change because most of its population depends on agriculture and particularly rain-fed agriculture. This situation has serious implications for the food security of the country with attendant rippling effects on other sectors of our economy. Available data indicates that over the past 40 years, Ghana's average temperature has increased by 1<sup>o</sup> C. The rate of increase was more rapid in the Northern sector than in the South, which makes it even more challenging for the country. Within this period, rainfall was highly variable and uncertain.

This brings into focus the prediction of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that *'increases of less than 1-3 degrees centigrade above 1990 levels will produce beneficial impacts in some regions and harmful ones in others. Net annual costs will increase over time as global temperatures rise'*

Mr. Chairman, over the past few years Ghana has experienced what I will call "practical manifestation and direct impacts of climate change". The northern floods in 2007 directly affected a total of 317,000 people, destroyed 1,000 km of roads, affected 210 schools, damaged 45 healthcare facilities and contaminated or damaged 630 drinking water facilities. Direct loss of crops, livestock, agricultural equipment and machinery as well as food storage facilities were enormous.

Again, in October 2010, several districts were severely flooded in five out of the ten regions in Ghana. Further to this, in December 2013, Teshie, a suburb of Accra was flooded and lives and some properties were lost.

Dear Colleagues, Climate change is real and I want to believe that most of us here, at one time or the other in our public discourses would have talked about climate change, either because it is fashionable to do so or out of genuine concerns for its negative impacts on the economy and food security. The Food and Agricultural Sector Development Plan (FASDEP II) under Policy Strategies and as part of the issues it was stated *"seasonal variability in food supply and prices due to **climatic changes** (emphasis mine) and other natural occurrences make it difficult for Ghana to meet its food demands all year round, especially in the three northern regions."* And on page 22 of METASIP, that is the Sector's plan which operationalizes the FASDEP document, the strategies outlined as the sector's preparedness *"to respond to the needs of victims of natural hazards and other calamities including climate change"*,

are mundane and couched in the usual policy language and do not reflect any urgency in our approach to issues of climate change. Some of the experiences enumerated above are grim reminders of the insidiousness of climate change and we should look at them as a wake-up call to confront climate change as the developmental issue that it has become. The impacts of climate change and variability cut across various sectors requiring a multi-sectorial approach. It is gratifying to note that Ghana since 2010 has undertaken several initiatives towards developing comprehensive programmes as part of processes leading to enhancing national adaptation to climate change. At present a National Climate Change Policy has been developed with a focus of achieving a sustainable socio-economic growth.

Whiles these cross-sectorial efforts are encouraging, a strong action at sectorial level is required to transform these national level strategies into implementable actions on the ground. At present whiles there is some level of awareness of the impact of climate change on agriculture and food systems within the agriculture sector in Ghana, there is little effort at the high policy level to address it.

At the point we are now it is not sufficient to only consider the subject matter in policy decisions. There is the need to be more pragmatic. And this is the reason why we are here so that we can be motivated to use our positions to make the desired changes that are required to be climate change compliant. In all of this Research has a major role to play..

Mr. Chairman, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture has the responsibility to influence the way farmers in this country ply their trade. Three out of the six policy objectives in the FASDEP II document create windows of opportunities for climate change adaptation intervention actions to be implemented under various sub-sectors. Some of such interventions include the vigorous promotion of sustainable land and water management technologies on smallholder farms, rehabilitation of irrigation facilities, promotion of small pump irrigation systems, rehabilitation of feeder roads, provision of warehousing facilities, agroforestry systems, etc MOFA has the obligation to be constantly on the look out and actively seek technologies that would boost agricultural production under a stressed environment. Technologies, such as the System for Rice Intensification (SRI) which, have produced yields double the world average. Controversial as it has become, SRI is a crop management approach that can be adjusted to local conditions and requirements based on its four interacting principles:

- Early, quick and healthy plant establishment;
- Reduced plant density;
- Improved soil conditions through enrichment with organic matter; and
- Reduced and controlled water application.

These principles which we can describe as as good agricultural practices (GAP), form the basis of SRI practices, which can be adapted to local conditions such as water availability, soil conditions, weather, labor availability, and access to seeds.

In country **Mr.** Chairman, at the Regional and National levels, the Ministry and its agencies collaborate with all relevant Ministries, Departments and Agencies, especially AGRA, CSIR, GMet, MESTI and International and Local NGOs, the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies in discussing and promoting various climate change adaptation actions at the middle and higher levels.

In addition to these, the MoFA has constituted a national climate change task force, which is reviewing the current FASDEP II document under the lenses of climate change to identify entry points for adaptation actions and also inform the policy review process to make the next sector policy climate change responsive. (NUS speech). I would admit that one day is not enough to address all the nuances about climate change, but it is one significant step in the right direction. The consequences of climate change do not only strike at the heart of food security

Mr. chairman, ladies and gentlemen, I have to put on record that most of the already mentioned interventions and actions have been undertaken with financial support from our development partners. Let me on behalf of His Excellency the President thank our esteemed development partners for their resolve to support us in our efforts at adapting our agricultural activities to climate change.

While thanking the development partners, I want to also state that we cannot depend solely on them to finance the country's desired interventions aimed at addressing impacts of climate change on agriculture.

The MoFA has therefore resolved to commit some of its budget allocation directly to address issues of climate change adaptation actions on incremental basis starting from this year 2014.

This commitment will go a long way to improve the resilience of the country's agriculture sector to climate change and improve the food security of Ghana.

Mr. Chairman, I wish at this juncture to officially declare the workshop duly opened.

Thank you